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CHRONOLOGY OF THE CUBAN CRISIS

OCTOBER 15-28, 1962

This chronology has been prepared on the basis of information provided by the White House Press Office, the Department of Defense Office of Public Affairs, and the State Department Bureau of Public Affairs.

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CUBA

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Chronology of the Cuban Crisis, October 15-28, 1962

October 15
Monday

Aerial photographs taken previous day are developed and analyzed. They indicate existence of strategic missiles and sites in Cuba. Between 8 and 10 p.m. this information is relayed to Secretary McNamara, Deputy Secretary Gilpatric, General Carter, General Carroll, General Taylor, Secretary of State Rusk, Under Secretary Ball, Deputy Under Secretary U. Alexis Johnson, Mr. McGeorge Bundy, CIA Director McCone and his Deputy, Ray Cline, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Edwin Martin. Secretary Rusk takes call in pantry outside State Dining Room at State Department, where he is hosting dinner for German Foreign Minister Schroeder. Mr. Martin receives message at National Press Club, just after he finishes talk to Sigma Delta Chi on Cuba situation.

October 16
Tuesday

At 9 a. m. the President in his bedroom receives photographic evidence from Mr. McGeorge Bundy. At 11:45 President convenes meeting at the White House. Those attending: Vice President, Secretary Rusk, Secretary McNamara, Attorney General, General Maxwell Taylor, Messrs. Roswell Gilpatric, George Ball, Edwin Martin, McGeorge Bundy, Ted Sorenson, Douglas Dillon, Charles Bohlen and Kenneth O'Donnell. It is decided that reconnaissance of Cuba should be greatly increased. Conferences that afternoon at the State Department included Messrs. Rusk, Ball, Martin, Alexis Johnson, Ambassador Bohlen, Ambassador Thompson, Ambassador Stevenson. At 6:30 p. m. there is another

meeting at the White House, with the same people as the morning meeting.

Meetings resume at the State Department that evening, winding up in the Secretary's office after 11 p. m. It is decided to maintain very tight security.

That afternoon and thereafter every morning at 8:30 the U. S. Intelligence Board meets. Representatives from State Department, CIA, and military. In Moscow, Ambassador ^{KOHLER} ~~Bolton~~ sees Mr. Khrushchev.

October 17
Wednesday

A "blur of meetings" of the main policy group in Under Secretary Ball's Conference Room. All the people at Tuesday's White House meetings except the President and Vice President, with the addition of Mr. Dean Acheson, Mr. John McCone, Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson.

Meeting evaluates the evidence, what it means, and possible responses.

Reconnaissance flights ordered Tuesday take place. Read-out on aerial photographs indicates launching pads and signs of mobile launchers with missiles.

President sees Mr. McGeorge Bundy and Mr. John McCone at 9:35 a. m. Flies to Connecticut to campaign in afternoon. Is met at airport that night by Mr. Robert Kennedy and Mr. Ted Sorenson.

Was a day of "full and free discussion", no rigid positions, no "departmental" points of view.

October 18
Thursday

Meeting with President at White House at 11 a.m. At 3:30 p. m. the President met with Secretaries Rusk and McNamara. In between,

group assembles in Secretary of State's conference room, starting at 2:30. That meeting continues into evening. At 4:30 the President met Mr. Rusk and Ambassador Thompson alone. They met with Mr. Gromyko at 5 to 7:08 p. m. Dinner for Mr. Gromyko at State Department starts at 8:00 p.m., lasts until 12:25 a. m. Meanwhile, meeting continues in Mr. Ball's conference room. Secretary McNamara, Mr. Roswell Gilpatric, and Mr. John McCone, seen arriving at State Department, are asked by a reporter "Are you going to the dinner?" Reply: "Yes." At 9 p. m. the President called the group, except Ambassador Bohlen, replaced by Ambassador Thompson, to White House. To avoid attracting attention to their limousines, nine of the group rode to White House in one car. At this meeting final consensus began to develop. At 12:25 a. m. Mr. Rusk, Mr. Ball, Mr. Johnson, Ambassador Thompson, Mr. Martin confer in Secretary's conference room. Mr. Robert Lovett brought in that afternoon.

During day reconnaissance of Cuba continues.

Deputy Defense Secretary Gilpatric requested the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs (General Taylor) to: 1) have a list prepared of riot control equipment and other support which the U. S. could give Latin American nations for internal security purposes; 2) determine which Latin American nations could assist the U. S. in a blockade of Cuba; 3) to prepare a list of offensive weapons to include in a blockade; 4) to consider pro's and con's of blockading aircraft as well as ships.

October 19
Friday

Meetings of interdepartmental group all day from 11 a. m. at State Department, mainly in Under Secretary's conference room. As outlines of possible courses of action emerge, working groups are established within the policy group. Before President left on trip met JCS, Mr. Rusk and Mr. McNamara. Departure delayed one-half hour. President away on campaign trip. That night Secretary Rusk cancels speech to Business Council in Hot Springs, Va. Our ambassadors to Latin American countries who are in the U. S. are ordered to return to their posts. Aerial reconnaissance continues.

Cancellation of TAC's full mobility exercise is announced by Pentagon, attributed to weather in refueling areas caused by Hurricane Ella.

During night first draft of President's October 22 speech put together.

Following statement used in response to query: "A Pentagon spokesman denied tonight that any alert has been ordered or that any emergency measures have been set in motion against Communist ruled Cuba.

Further, the spokesman said the Pentagon has no information indicating the presence of offensive weapons in Cuba."

October 20
Saturday

9:00 a. m. meeting at State Department in Mr. Ball's conference room. During morning several Assistant Secretaries of State brought in (Messrs. Tyler, Talbot, Harriman) and Legal Adviser Chayes to draft messages, letters, contingency papers.

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At 8:12 a. m., the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised commanders-in-chief that state of tension in Cuba could lead to military action. USIA prepares to link up American medium wave stations with Voice of America to broadcast President's speech, and to go on 24 hours a day transmission in Spanish. President returns from campaign trip with "cold."

At 2:30 p. m. meeting of planning group of principals of National Security Council, Oval Room. The full group, including Ambassadors Stevenson, Thompson, Robert Lovett. Detailed intelligence briefing given, aerial photographs exhibited. Enlarged photographs shown to President on the stage of work at each missile site. President decides to institute the quarantine as quickly as possible taking into account need to notify allies and to permit military preparations.

President's television address set for Monday at 7:00 p. m. P Hour. Draft of speech discussed and revised. Plans for OAS, United Nations, also presented. Possibility remained of acting sooner if a security breach developed. That night State Department sends "pre-position" messages to all Latin American posts, subject to

"go" signal Monday, indicating course of action to be followed.

Defense Department prepares for quarantine.

October 21
Sunday

Staffs summoned during day to Defense, State Departments. Work at State involves Operations Center, Executive Secretariat, regional and functional bureaus. Tight security successfully maintained. Drafting of Quarantine Proclamation completed.

Mr. Dean Acheson briefed for mission to Europe. Mr. Livingston Merchant called in to prepare for mission to Ottawa. Ambassador Dowling called back from Georgia. Resolutions prepared for OAS, UN. Mr. Robert Manning (State), Mr. Arthur Sylvester (Defense), Mr. Pierre Salinger (White House) meet to establish public affairs coordination.

President meets with National Security Council, and with Mr. Don Wilson (USIA), Admiral Anderson (CNO) at 2:30 p. m. Discussion centers on third draft of speech and progress reports on preparations. It was decided that our first objective would be to block further shipments of offensive military equipment to Cuba, and that our aim was also to see that the Soviet missiles were removed from Cuba under UN supervision and inspection. Mr. O'Brien

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worked up a list of Congressional leaders to be summoned to Washington. Mr. Salinger, Mr. O'Brien, and General McHugh worked out airfields at which jets could pick up Congressmen concerned in the morning.

During the day Mr. Larry O'Brien summons congressional leaders to White House meeting Monday at 5 p.m. Sunday night State Department sends top secret telegrams in code describing proposed actions to our Ambassadors. Text of President's speech with covering letter to Mr. Khrushchev sent to Embassy in Moscow for delivery to Soviet Foreign Office one hour before President's speech. President's letters to Prime Minister MacMillan, President de Gaulle, Chancellor Adenauer, Prime Ministers Nehru, Diefenbaker, and Fanfani, Mayor Brandt and others sent in code to our Embassies for transmission. Text of President's speech sent in code to all posts. Individual letters from President sent to 43 Heads of Government. During weekend the State Department transmitted 15 separate Presidential letters or other documents to a total of 441 recipients.

That afternoon and evening the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the Commander in Chief of the Atlantic Fleet (CINCLANT) to prepare to evacuate dependents from Guantanamo on Monday, to reinforce that base starting Monday, to assume

operational control of certain Army and Air Force units, and to be prepared to furnish riot support control to Latin American countries as required. At 10 p.m. Secretary McNamara approved the procedures and rules of the quarantine.

October 22
Monday

Mr. Larry O'Brien started summoning Congressional leaders. Policy group meets with President at 11:00 a.m. National Security Council meets at 3:00. President formally establishes Executive Committee of National Security Council and asks it to meet with him daily at 10:00 a.m. At noon, Mr. Pierre Salinger requests air time from radio and television networks, which is granted, and announces President will make important statement at 7:00 p.m. Also, at noon, dependents start being evacuated from Guantanamo. That morning a planning directive for the quarantine of Cuba was issued to the Atlantic Fleet. Nine radio stations are asked to broadcast President's speech to Latin America in Spanish. 4:00 p.m. Cabinet meeting. 5:00 p.m. Briefing for Congressional leaders at White House. 6:15 NATO, SEATO, CENTO Ambassadors' given background briefing at State Department. At 6:00 p.m. Ambassador Dobrynin sees Secretary Rusk. During day Prime Minister MacMillan briefed by Ambassador Bruce, President de Gaulle by Mr. Dean Acheson, and Chancellor Adenauer by Ambassador Dowling.

Mr. Acheson also briefs NATO Council. At 7:00 p.m.

President speaks. At 7:30 letter from Ambassador Stevenson with draft of U.S. resolution given to Mr. Zorin in his capacity as President of the Security Council. At 7:30 p.m., Assistant Secretary Martin briefs OAS Ambassadors. At 8:15 p.m.

Secretary Rusk briefs all other Ambassadors, and State Department background briefing for the press is held. Secretary McNamara briefs press at Pentagon, also on background basis.

Aerial photographs exhibited and explained at all briefings.

Public Affairs offices at State, Defense, White House go on 24-hour basis. Pentagon reviews mobilization planning.

Preparations are ordered for possible reserve recall. Secretary McNamara directs step up in induction and training of Cuban nationals. From 10:40 to 11:25 p.m. he visits office of Chief of Naval Operations for discussions of the blockade and establishment of surveillance.

October 23
Tuesday

Executive Committee meets twice, 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

President approves issuance of Proclamation of Interdiction.

President signs Executive Order authorizing extension of tours of duty for certain members of armed forces. Three subcommittees of Executive Committee established: on Berlin problems, advance planning, and communications. At 7:00 p.m. President signs

Proclamation at White House. At 8:00 p.m. Secretary of Defense announces that action has been taken to deploy our forces to make effective the quarantine by 10:00 a.m. the next morning. Also announces extension of active duty of certain personnel in Navy and Marine Corps. CINCLANT instructed to implement maritime quarantine. Chief of Naval Operations put in charge. At 9:00 a.m. Secretary Rusk speaks to OAS Organ of Consultation in Washington. At 3:00 p.m. the OAS reconvenes and at 4:45 by 19-0 vote, it adopts Resolution backing quarantine and urging immediate removal of Soviet missiles from Cuba.

At 4:00 p.m. Ambassador Stevenson delivers opening statements to Security Council, and exhibits aerial photographs. Cuban and Soviet UN Representatives also speak. Messages from President sent by State Department to Mayor Brandt, Chancellor Adenauer, President de Gaulle.

October 24
Wednesday

Quarantine takes effect. Executive Committee meets at 10 a.m. at White House. At 11:00 a.m. State Department background briefing is held for delegates of European Broadcasting Union. OAS meets at 3:00 p.m. At 3 p.m., the French, British, and German ambassadors see Secretary Rusk. There is a Congressional Briefing at 5:00 p.m. at the White House. At 1:00 a.m. 14 aerial reconnaissance photos (prematurely released by

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American Embassy, London) are made available to U.S. press. At 7:35 p.m. four low level aerial rec photos released. TASS releases exchange of telegrams between Mr. Bertrand Russel and Mr. Khrushchev. White House requests public media to exercise discretion in publishing information relating to national security. Defense issues announcement centralizing information release in Office of Public Affairs. At 4:00 p.m. Defense announces there are 8-10 bases near various Cuban cities, each base having 40 launchers; and that there are over 30 missiles, over 20 IL-28 jet fighter bombers, and over 5,000 Soviet personnel in Cuba. The Greek oiler "Sirius" is cleared through the quarantine. At 9:00 a.m. the Security Council meets, with statements by Venezuela, the United Kingdom, Roumania, and Ireland. At 2:00 p.m. Mr. U Thant sends identical messages to President and Mr. Khrushchev asking that US and Soviet ships avoid direct confrontation for the next few days. At the 6:00 p.m. Security Council meeting there are statements by France, China, Chile, UAR, Ghana, and the Secretary General. UAR and Ghana submit resolution calling on both sides to refrain from action and to negotiate.

October 25
Thursday

Executive Committee of National Security Council meets at 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. The President given report on military situation and issues instructions for the interdiction and inspection of non-Bloc ships. President's reply to U Thant's message (10/24)

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sent at 2:19 p.m., stating Ambassador Stevenson will talk to U Thant. Mr. Khrushchev also replies to Mr. U Thant.

At 2:26 p.m. Mr. U Thant sends second message to President and Mr. Khrushchev asking avoidance of direct confrontations of Soviet and American ships in quarantine. Resolution adopted by the OAS on 10/23 transmitted to the UN. At Security Council meeting, Ambassador Stevenson challenges Mr. Zorin to deny existence of Soviet missiles in Cuba. State Department gives background briefing for U.S. press, followed by 2:00 p.m. briefing for foreign press. State Department conducts briefings for Congressmen in Atlanta, New York City, Chicago, and San Francisco.

At 11:50 a.m., Defense Department announces at least a dozen Soviet vessels have turned back, and that at 8:00 a.m. the Navy had intercepted the Soviet tanker BUCHAREST proceeding towards Cuba and permitted it to proceed without boarding.

At 8:35 p.m. the East German passenger ship VOIDERFRUEND with 20 students bound for Havana was cleared through the quarantine, as was the British ship SUIACO, bound for Jamaica. Late that night instructions are sent to all posts on "CLEARCERT" procedures to be followed by vessels departing from foreign ports destined for quarantine areas.

October 26
Friday

10:00 a.m. Excomm meeting at White House. Secretary of Defense reports on quarantine and Secretary Rusk reports on negotiations underway between Mr. U Thant and Ambassador Stevenson. The President authorizes release of statement noting that missile development work is continuing in Cuba and recalling his earlier statement that such work must cease. At 4:00 p.m. British, German, and French Ambassadors are briefed at State Department and see Secretary. At 7:50 a.m. The Lebanese flag ship MARUCLA under charter to the Soviet Union is intercepted and boarded by a party from the JOSEPH P. KENNEDY and PIERCE. Boarding party not armed and ship permitted to proceed when no weapons are found. Later the Swedish ship COLLANGATTA passed through quarantine. At 6:15 Mr. Salinger announced that photo reconnaissance reveals continued buildup of missiles in Cuba. At 6:00 p.m. letter from Mr. Khrushchev to President received at State Department. In letter to Mr. U Thant Mr. Khrushchev accepts proposal that Soviet ships should stay out of interception area. President replies to Mr. U Thant that incidents can be avoided if Soviet ships stay out of interception area. Mr. U Thant sends letter to Premier Castro asking that work on missile bases be suspended while negotiations under way. Secretary of State and aides remain late at State Department analyzing the

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messages and other signals. That day tightened security measures go into effect at Pentagon. At 11:00 p.m. still unpublished letter received.

October 27
Saturday

President meets with Executive Committee of National Security at 10:00 a.m. in the Situation Room at the White House. During that meeting Mr. Khrushchev letter to President received as published in TASS and broadcast on Radio Moscow, stating that Jupiter missiles should be withdrawn from Turkey in exchange for removal of Soviet missiles from Cuba. Between 10:15 and 11:00 a.m. a U-2 reconnaissance plane is shot down over Eastern Cuba. At about the same hour a U-2 accidentally overflies the Chokut Peninsula in Eastern USSR due to navigational difficulties. At Excomm President decides to issue public statement in response to unacceptable Mr. Khrushchev message of that morning, and to reply to Khrushchev letter of previous evening. White House press release at 4:35 p.m. refers to "inconsistent and conflicting" proposals of the USSR and calls attention to imperative necessity of dealing immediately with the Soviet missile threat in Cuba, "under which no sensible negotiation can proceed." At 3:15 p.m. the State Department announced the CLEARCERT system to assist vessels intending to transit waters near Cuba.

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At 3:35 p.m. the Pentagon announces that Jupiter missiles were made available to Turkey pursuant to a NATO Council Resolution of December, 1957. Also announced that our reconnaissance plane on flight over Cuba is missing and presumed lost. At 4:00 p.m. the Excomm meets again with President. Secretary McNamara reports that two low-level reconnaissance planes flying over Cuba have been fired on by light anti-aircraft and small arms. President approves reply to Mr. Khrushchev's private letter of the previous evening. It is transmitted at 8:05 p.m. and released to the press.

At 4:00 p.m. the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised CINCLANT that the circular areas of 500 nautical miles radius centered on Havana and Cape Maysi had been designated as the "interception area" for the quarantine of Cuba. At 9:00 p.m. a note is received from the Secretary General that Soviet Representative Zorin refuses to receive information about the "interception area." At 9:00 Excomm Meeting President approves call-up of 24 troop carrier squadrons of the Air Force Reserve, which is announced by Secretary McNamara at 9:20 p.m.

At 9:19 p.m. State Department receives copy of Premier Castro's reply to Mr. U Thant flatly rejecting the proposal that missile bases be dismantled and demanding immediate halt of the naval blockade. Excomm discusses additional steps to be taken

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following day, such as mobilizing U.S. merchant ships and adding petroleum, oil, and lubricants to the prohibited list. That night at 12:12 a.m. instructions are sent to Ambassador Finletter for a special meeting of the NATO Council, to report on actions taken thus far and to review with NATO the problems arising out of Mr. Khrushchev's public letter. Letters from President are sent to President de Gaulle, and Chancellor Adenauer.

October 28
Sunday

Defense Department announces names of units of Air Force Reserve called up and that aerial reconnaissance of Cuba continuing. About 10:00 a.m. new Khrushchev message is broadcast over Radio Moscow. (Delivered to American Embassy, Moscow at 7:00 p.m. local time, ten minutes after start of broadcast). Full text as broadcast available at 11:00 a.m. meeting of Executive Committee. Message orders dismantling and returning of missiles to USSR under UN supervision. A reply to Mr. Khrushchev is discussed, approved, sent, and released, without waiting for official text to be received. The President in Excomm and a State Department official at 1:00 p.m. background press briefing indicate that while we welcome Mr. Khrushchev's message, it remains to be implemented, and many serious problems will be encountered in the withdrawal of Soviet weapons from Cuba. This is not a

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time for gloating, nor can one reach any general conclusions about the future course of Soviet conduct in other areas. At 1:30 p.m. the Joint Chiefs direct CINCLANT to take no forceful action and not to board any ships until further orders.

At 5:00 p.m. Secretary of State briefs Latin American Ambassadors on latest developments. At 5:40 p.m.

Mr. U Thant writes President Kennedy stating his understanding of the agreement that has been reached in the exchange of correspondence. At 6:30 p.m. President sends letter to Mr. U Thant confirming the lines on which a satisfactory settlement of the Cuban situation can be reached. Mr. U Thant writes Premier Castro accepting invitation to go to Cuba with aides to work out solution.

ANNOTATED DRAFT FOLLOWS

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Chronology of the Cuban Crisis, October 15-28, 1962

The following account is based on TOP SECRET material and has not been cleared for any public use. The material enclosed in brackets appears to be such that it cannot be released at this time.

The chronology has been prepared on the basis of information provided by the White House Press Office, the Department of Defense Office of Public Affairs, and the State Department Bureau of Public Affairs.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE		IS/FPC/CDR	Date: 12-18-92
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELEASE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DECLASSIFY	MR Cases Only:	
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE IS/FPC/CDR *SR* Date: *June 5, 1992*

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October 16
Tuesday

DILLON?
BOHLEN?
CARTER, CIA!
X O'DONNELL

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At 9 a.m. the President in his bedroom receives photographic evidence from McGeorge Bundy. At 11:45 President convenes meeting at the White House. Those attending: Vice President, Secretary Rusk, Secretary McNamara, Attorney General, General Maxwell Taylor, Roswell Gilpatric, George Ball, Edwin Martin, McGeorge Bundy, Ted Sorensen. It is decided that reconnaissance of Cuba should be greatly increased.

Conferences that afternoon at the State Department include Rusk, Ball, Martin, Alexis Johnson, Ambassador Bohlen, Ambassador Thompson, Ambassador Stevenson. At 6:30 p.m. there is another meeting at the White House, with the same people as the morning meeting.

Meetings resume at the State Department that evening, winding up in the Secretary's office after 11 p.m. It is decided to maintain very tight security. (Code name for project is "PEANUTS")

That afternoon and thereafter every morning at 8:30 the U. S. Intelligence Board meets. Representatives from State Department, CIA, and military.

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October 17
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the President, with the addition of Secretary Dillon,
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the evidence, what it means, and possible responses.

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Read-out on aerial photographs indicates ~~launching~~ launching
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President sees ^{John F. Kennedy} McGeorge Bundy at 9:35 a.m. Flies to
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October 18
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Meeting with President at White House at 11 a.m. and
again at 3:30 p.m. In between, group assembles in

Secretary of State's conference room, starting at 2:30.

That meeting continues into evening. At 4:30, Busk and
Thompson depart for White House meeting with Gromyko.

Dinner for Gromyko at State Department starts at

8:00 p.m., lasts until 12:25 a.m. Meanwhile, ~~McNamara~~

~~McNamara~~ continues in Ball's Conference Room. Secretary

McNamara, Roswell Gilpatric, and John McCone, seen

arriving at State Department, are asked by a reporter

"Are you going to the dinner." Reply: "Yes." At 9 p.m.

meeting shifts to White House, where President joins.

To avoid attracting attention to their limousines, nine
of the group rode to White House in one car. At 12:25 a.m.

Busk, Ball, Johnson, Thompson, Martin confer in Secretary's
conference room. Robert Lovett brought in that afternoon,

During day reconnaissance of Cuba continues. ~~GCS~~

~~authorizes certain aircraft to be deployed to fields in~~
~~Southeast United States.~~

Deputy Defense Secretary Gilpatric requested the Chairman
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October 18

Thursday Continued

internal security purposes; 2) determine which

Latin American nations could assist the U.S. in

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weapons to include in a blockade; 4) to consider pro's

and con's of blockading aircraft as well as ships;

5) to look into ramifications of working with

Alpha 66 craft or other Cuban exile units.

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* Before going
on this trip,
Rear Mr.
Went to P.O.,
P.O. Box
No. 100
for a letter
from Mr. H.
1/2 hour.

*A Pentagon spokesman denied tonight that any alert has been ordered or [that any emergency measures have been set in motion against Communist ruled Cuba. Further, the spokesman said the Pentagon has no information indicating the presence of offensive weapons in Cuba.] At 1:20 p.m., the Atlantic and Caribbean commands are alerted against possible air attack on Panama Canal, Romey AFB and Naval Station, Roosevelt Roads, and are requested to prepare recommendations for augmentation of air defenses. Hawk Battalions are directed to increase readiness.]

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of the Bureau of the Army, War Department.

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Saturday
October 20

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9:00 a.m. meeting at State Department in Ball's Conference Room. During morning several Assistant Secretaries of State brought in (Tyler, Talbot, Harriman) to work on draft messages, letters, contingency papers. ~~A "scenario" is drafted by Alexis Johnson, scripting the proposed course of action for all the branches of government involved.~~

At 8:12 a.m., the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised commanders-in-chief that state of tension in Cuba could lead to military action. USIA prepares to link up American medium wave stations with Voice of America to broadcast President's speech, and to go on 24 hours a day transmission in Spanish. President returns from campaign trip with "cold."

~~[President sees British Ambassador Ormsby-Gore.]~~

Memorandum in the
2:30 p.m. Meeting of National Security Council, Oval Room. The full group, including Ambassadors Stevenson, Thompson, Robert Lovett, ~~Dean Rusk~~
Detailed intelligence briefing given, aerial

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October 21
Sunday

~~TOP SECRET~~
Staffs summoned during day to Defense, State Departments

~~for Operation El Paso~~. Work at State involves Operations Center, Executive Secretariat, regional and functional bureaus. Tight security successfully maintained. Quarantine Proclamation prepared. Dean Acheson briefed for mission to Europe. Livingston Merchant called in to prepare for mission to Ottawa. Ambassador Dowling called back from Georgia. Individual, personal letters prepared from President to 43 Heads of Government. Resolutions prepared for OAS, UN. Robert Manning (State), Arthur Sylvester (Defense), Pierre Salinger (White House) meet to establish public affairs coordination.

President meets with National Security Council at 2:30 p.m. Discussion centers on third draft of speech and progress reports on preparations. It was decided that our first objective would be to block further shipments of offensive military equipment to Cuba, and that our aim was also to see that the Soviet missiles were removed from Cuba under UN supervision and inspection.

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October 21 continued
Sunday

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of President's speech with covering letter to Khrushchev sent to Embassy in Moscow for delivery to Soviet Foreign Office one hour before President's speech. President's letters to Prime Minister Macmillan, de Gaulle, Adenauer, Nehru, Diefenbaker, Fanfani, Mayor Brandt and others sent in code to our Embassies for transmission. Text of President's speech sent in code to all posts. Individual letters from President sent to 43 Heads of Government. During that weekend the State Department transmitted 15 separate Presidential letters or other documents to a total of 441 recipients.

That afternoon and evening the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the Commander in Chief of the Atlantic Fleet (CINCLANT) to prepare to evacuate dependents from Guantanamo on Monday, to reinforce that base starting Monday, to assume operational control of certain Army and Air Force units, and to be prepared to furnish riot support control to Latin American countries as required. At 10 p.m. Secretary McNamara approved the procedures and rules of the quarantine and authorizes the flying of nuclear weapons by interceptors in the U.S.

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Monday
October 22

Policy group meets with President at 11:00 a.m.
National Security Council meets at 3:00. President formally establishes Executive Committee of National Security Council and asks it to meet with him daily at 10:00 a.m. At noon Pierre Salinger announces President will make important statement at 7:00 p.m. and requests air time from radio and television networks, which is granted. Also at noon, dependents start being evacuated from Guantanamo. That morning a planning directive for the quarantine of Cuba was issued to the Atlantic Fleet. Nine radio stations are asked to broadcast President's speech to Latin American in Spanish. 4:00 p.m. Cabinet meeting. 5:00 p.m. briefing for Congressional leaders at White House. 6:15 NATO, SEATO, CENTO Ambassadors' given background briefing at State Department. At 6:00 p.m. Ambassador Dobrynin sees Secretary Eusk. During day Prime Minister Mcmillan briefed by Ambassador Bruce, President DeGaulle by Dean Acheson, and Chancellor Adenauer by Ambassador Dowling. Acheson also briefs NATO Council. At 7:00 p.m. President speaks. At 7:30 letter from President, given to Zorin in his capacity as Chairman of the Security Council (with text of U.S. Resolution). At 7:30, Assistant Secretary Martin briefs OAS Ambassadors. At 8:00 p.m. Secretary Eusk briefs all other Ambassadors, and State Department.

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background briefing for the press is held. Secretary McNamara briefs press at Pentagon, also on background basis. Aerial photographs exhibited and explained at all briefings. Public Affairs offices at State, Defense, White House go on 24-hour basis. Pentagon reviews mobilization planning. Preparations are ordered for possible reserve recall. Secretary McNamara directs step up in induction and training of Cuban nationals. From 10:40 to 11:25 p.m. he visits office of Chief of Naval Operations for discussions of the blockade and establishment of surveillance. Joint Chiefs of Staff instruct U.S. custodians in Turkey and Italy to take extraordinary precautions to insure that weapons are fired only upon Presidential authorization. Secretary McNamara is briefed on nuclear weapons.

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Tuesday
October 23

Executive Committee meets twice, 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. President approves issuance of Proclamation of Interdiction. President signs Executive Order authorizing extension of tours of duty for certain members of armed forces. [Low level reconnaissance of Cuba authorized by President.] Three subcommittees of Executive Committee established: on Berlin problems, advance planning, and communications. [Letter received from Chairman Khrushchev at 11:56 a.m. President's reply to Khrushchev sent at 6:51 p.m.] At 7:00 p.m. President signs Proclamation at White House. At 8:00 p.m. Secretary of Defense announces that action has been taken to deploy our forces to make effective the quarantine by 10:00 a.m. the next morning. Also announces extension of active duty of certain personnel in Navy and Marine Corps. CINCLANT instructed to implement maritime quarantine. Chief of Naval Operations put in charge. At 9:00 a.m. Secretary Rusk speaks to OAS Organ of Consultation in Washington. At 3:00 p.m. the OAS reconvenes and at 4:45 by 19-0 vote, it adopts Resolution backing quarantine and urging immediate removal of Soviet missiles from Cuba.

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At 4:00 p.m. Ambassador Stevenson delivers opening statement to Security Council, and exhibits aerial photographs. Cuban and Soviet UN Representatives also speak. Messages from President sent by State Department to Mayor Brandt, Chancellor Adenauer, President DeGaulle.

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Wednesday
October 24

Quarantine takes effect. Executive Committee meets at 10 am at White House. At 11:00 a.m. State Department background briefing is held for delegates of European Broadcasting Union. OAS meets at 3:00 p.m. At 3 p.m., the French, British, and German ambassadors see Secretary Rusk. There is a Congressional Briefing at 5:00 p.m. at the White House. At 1:00 a.m. 14 aerial reconnaissance photos (prematurely released by American Embassy, London) are made available to U.S. press. At 7:35 p.m. four low level aerial rec photos released. TASS releases exchange of telegrams between Bertrand Russell and Khrushchev. White House requests public media to exercise discretion in publishing information relating to national security. Defense issues announcement centralizing information release in office of Public Affairs. At 4:00 p.m. Defense announces there are 8-10 bases near various Cuban cities, each base having 40 launchers; and that there are over 30 missiles, over 20 IL-28 jet fighter bombers, and over 5,000 Soviet personnel in Cuba. The Greek oiler "Sirius" is cleared through the quarantine. At 9:00 a.m. the Security Council

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meets, with statements by Venezuela, the United Kingdom, Romania, and Ireland. At 2:00 p.m. U Thant sends identical messages to President and Khrushchev asking that US and Soviet ships avoid direct confrontation for the next few days. At the 6:00 p.m. Security Council meeting there are statements by France, China, Chile, UAR, Ghana, and the Secretary General. UAR and Ghana submit resolution calling on both sides to refrain from action and to negotiate. At 9:24 p.m. Khrushchev letter to President received at State Department. President's reply is transmitted at 1:59 a.m. Thursday, and is hand carried at that hour to the Soviet Embassy in Washington.⁷

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Thursday
October 25

Executive Committee of National Security Council meets at 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. The President given report on military situation and issues instructions for the interdiction and inspection of non-Bloc ships. President's reply to U Thant's message (10/24) sent at 2:19 p.m., stating Ambassador Stevenson will talk to U Thant. Khrushchev also replies to U Thant. At 2:26 p.m. U Thant sends second message to President and Khrushchev asking avoidance of direct confrontations of Soviet and American ships in quarantine. Resolution adopted by the OAS on 10/23 transmitted to the UN. At Security Council meeting, Stevenson challenges Zorin to deny existence of Soviet missiles in Cuba. State Department gives background briefing for U.S. press, followed by 2:00 p.m. briefing for foreign press. State Department conducts briefings for Congressmen in Atlanta, New York City, Chicago, San Francisco.

At 11:50 a.m., Defense Department announces at least a dozen Soviet vessels have turned back, and that at 8:00 a.m. the Navy had intercepted the Soviet tanker Bucharest proceeding towards Cuba and permitted it to proceed without boarding.

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At 8:35 p.m. the East German passenger ship
VOIDERFRUEND with 20 students bound for Havana
was cleared through the quarantine, as was the
British ship SUIACO, bound for Jamaica. Late
that night instructions are sent to all posts
on "CLEARCERT" procedures to be followed by
vessels departing from foreign ports destined
for quarantine areas. ☒ That day USIA looked
into possibility of leaflet drop to Cuba.
Proposed leaflet text prepared and checked
personally by the President. *[Signature]*

[Handwritten initials]

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Friday
October 26

10:00 a.m. Excomm meeting at White House.

Secretary of Defense reports on quarantine and Secretary Rusk reports on negotiations underway between U Thant and Stevenson. The President authorizes release of statement noting that missile development work is continuing in Cuba and recalling his earlier statement that such work must cease. Authorization granted for leaflet drop on Cuba. Leaflets to contain aerial reconnaissance photograph of missile site. At 4:00 p.m. British, German, and French Ambassadors are briefed at State Department and see Secretary. At 7:50 a.m. the Lebanese flag ship MARUCLA under charter to the Soviet Union is intercepted and boarded by a party from the JOSEPH P. KENNEDY and PIERCE. Boarding party not armed and ship permitted to proceed when no weapons are found. Later the Swedish ship COLLANGATTA passed through quarantine. At 6:15 Mr. Salinger announced that photo reconnaissance reveals continued buildup of missiles in Cuba. At 6:00 p.m. letter from Khrushchev to President received at State Department. In letter to U Thant Khrushchev accepts proposal

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that Soviet ships should stay out of interception area. President replies to U Thant that incidents can be avoided if Soviet ships stay out of interception area. U Thant sends letter to Castro asking that work on missile bases be suspended while negotiations under way. [Informal messages from Soviets received through unofficial channels at UN and Washington.] Secretary of State and aides remain late at State Department analyzing the messages and other signals. That day tightened security measures go into effect at Pentagon. [At 10:00 p.m. Executive Committee meeting sample leaflets prepared to drop on Cuba are distributed.]

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Saturday
October 27

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President meets with Executive Committee of National Security at 10:00 a.m. in the Situation Room at the White House. During that meeting Khrushchev letter to President received as published in TASS and broadcast on Radio Moscow, stating that Jupiter missiles should be withdrawn from Turkey in exchange for removal of Soviet missiles from Cuba. Between 10:15 and 11:00 a.m. a U-2 reconnaissance plane is shot down over Eastern Cuba. At about the same hour a U-2 accidentally overflies the Chokut Peninsula in Eastern USSR due to navigational difficulties. [Soviet fighters scramble from a base near Wrangel Island.] At Excomm President decides to issue public statement in response to unacceptable Khrushchev message of that morning, and to reply to Khrushchev letter of previous evening. White House press release at 4:35 p.m. refers to "inconsistent and conflicting" proposals of the USSR and calls attention to imperative necessity of dealing immediately with the Soviet missile threat in Cuba, "under which no sensible negotiation can proceed." At 3:15 p.m. the State Department announces ~~the~~ CLEARCERT

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system to assist vessels intending to transit waters near Cuba. [Mid-day, approximately 5 million leaflets for Cuba printed and loaded in containers. The order to drop them was never given.]

At 3:35 p.m. the Pentagon announces that Jupiter missiles were made available to Turkey pursuant to a NATO Council Resolution of December, 1957. Also announced that our reconnaissance plane on flight over Cuba is missing and presumed lost. At 4:00 p.m. the Excomm meets again with President.

Secretary McNamara reports that two low-level reconnaissance planes flying over Cuba have been fired on by light anti-aircraft and small arms. [President decides not to say anything about accidental U-2 flight over USSR that morning unless the Soviets publicized it.]

President [Orders further air reconnaissance missions and] approves reply to Khrushchev's private letter of the previous evening. It is transmitted at 8:05 p.m. and released to the press. At 4:00 p.m. the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised CINCLANT that the circular areas of 500 nautical miles radius centered on Havana and

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Cape Mayasi had been designated as the "interception area" for the quarantine of Cuba. At 9:00 p.m. a note is received from the Secretary General that Soviet Representative Zorin refuses to receive information about the "interception area." At 9:00 Excomm Meeting President approves call-up of 24 troop carrier squadrons of the Air Force Reserve, which is announced by Secretary McNamara at 9:20 p.m.

At 9:19 p.m. State Department receives copy of Castro reply to U Thant flatly rejecting the proposal that missile bases be dismantled and demanding immediate halt of the naval blockade. Excomm discusses additional steps to be taken following day, such as mobilizing U.S. merchant ships and adding petroleum, oil, and lubricants to the prohibited list. That night at 12:12 a.m. instructions are sent to Ambassador Finletter for a special meeting of the NATO Council, to report on actions taken thus far and to review with NATO the problems arising out of Khrushchev's public letter. Letters from President are sent to De Gaulle and Adenauer.

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Sunday
October 28

Defense Department announces names of units of Air Force Reserve called up and that aerial reconnaissance of Cuba continuing. About 10:00 a.m. new Khrushchev message is broadcast over Radio Moscow. (Delivered to American Embassy, Moscow at 7:00 p.m. local time, ten minutes after start of broadcast.) Full text as broadcast available at 11:00 a.m. meeting of Executive Committee. Message orders dismantling and returning of missiles to USSR under UN supervision. A reply to Khrushchev is discussed, approved, sent, and released, without waiting for official text to be received. The President in Excomm and a State Department official at 1:00 p.m. background press briefing indicate that while we welcome Khrushchev's message, it remains to be implemented, and many serious problems will be encountered in the withdrawal of Soviet weapons from Cuba. This is not a time for gloating, nor can one reach any general conclusions about the future course of Soviet conduct in other areas. At 1:30 p.m. the Joint Chiefs direct CINCLANT to take no forceful action and not to board any ships until further orders. At 6:30 p.m. CINCLANT is directed

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to maintain careful watch for Alpha 66 (Cuban exile) units and to prevent any operations against Cuba. 7

At 5:00 p.m. Secretary of State briefs Latin American Ambassadors on latest developments .

At 5:40 p.m. U Thant writes President Kennedy stating his understanding of the agreement that has been reached in the exchange of correspondence.

At 6:30 p.m. President sends letter to U Thant confirming the lines on which a satisfactory settlement of the Cuban situation can be reached.

U Thant writes Castro accepting invitation to go to Cuba with aides to work out solution.

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